

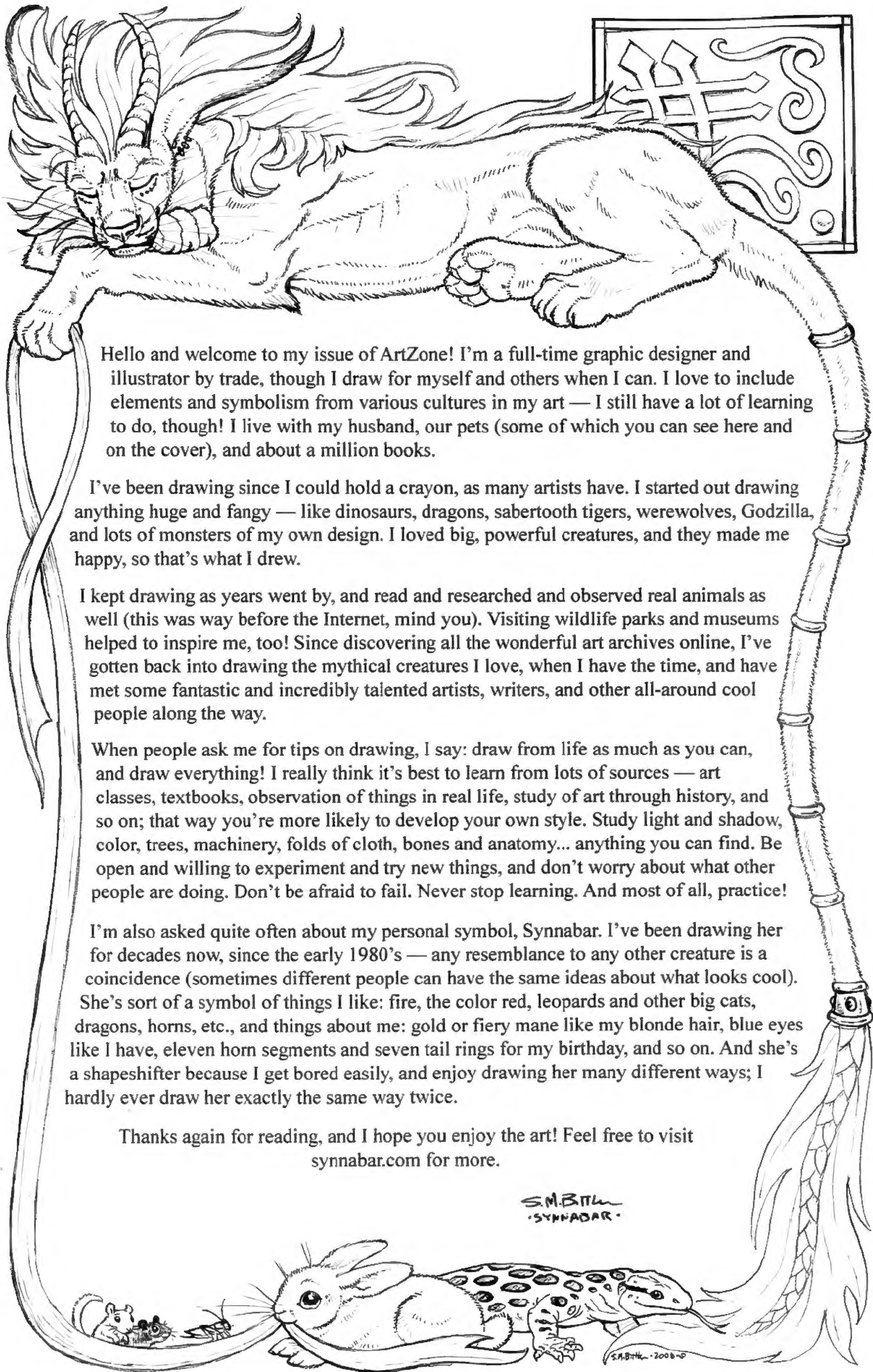


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# ARTZONE

WITH SYNABAR





Hello and welcome to my issue of ArtZone! I'm a full-time graphic designer and illustrator by trade, though I draw for myself and others when I can. I love to include elements and symbolism from various cultures in my art — I still have a lot of learning to do, though! I live with my husband, our pets (some of which you can see here and on the cover), and about a million books.

I've been drawing since I could hold a crayon, as many artists have. I started out drawing anything huge and fangy — like dinosaurs, dragons, sabertooth tigers, werewolves, Godzilla, and lots of monsters of my own design. I loved big, powerful creatures, and they made me happy, so that's what I drew.

I kept drawing as years went by, and read and researched and observed real animals as well (this was way before the Internet, mind you). Visiting wildlife parks and museums helped to inspire me, too! Since discovering all the wonderful art archives online, I've gotten back into drawing the mythical creatures I love, when I have the time, and have met some fantastic and incredibly talented artists, writers, and other all-around cool people along the way.

When people ask me for tips on drawing, I say: draw from life as much as you can, and draw everything! I really think it's best to learn from lots of sources — art classes, textbooks, observation of things in real life, study of art through history, and so on; that way you're more likely to develop your own style. Study light and shadow, color, trees, machinery, folds of cloth, bones and anatomy... anything you can find. Be open and willing to experiment and try new things, and don't worry about what other people are doing. Don't be afraid to fail. Never stop learning. And most of all, practice!

I'm also asked quite often about my personal symbol, Synnabar. I've been drawing her for decades now, since the early 1980's — any resemblance to any other creature is a coincidence (sometimes different people can have the same ideas about what looks cool). She's sort of a symbol of things I like: fire, the color red, leopards and other big cats, dragons, horns, etc., and things about me: gold or fiery mane like my blonde hair, blue eyes like I have, eleven horn segments and seven tail rings for my birthday, and so on. And she's a shapeshifter because I get bored easily, and enjoy drawing her many different ways; I hardly ever draw her exactly the same way twice.

Thanks again for reading, and I hope you enjoy the art! Feel free to visit [synnabar.com](http://synnabar.com) for more.

S.M. BITL  
SYNNABAR

S.M. BITL - 2008-08

From Halloween 2003, a kitsune-type shapeshifter, though she's really not a specific kind of fox. Her pawlike hands hold the mask a bit clumsily on purpose; I wanted to exaggerate the contrast between the feminine, human body and her true beast-like, predatory nature, and I thought more human-type hands, while pretty (and good for holding things daintily), wouldn't have



the effect I wanted. The dress is supposed to be almost like a shell for the animal-fox-spirit inside...

\*shrugs\* darn me and my symbolism. My kitsune-type creatures vary widely because I love to experiment (and I get bored easily) — I don't stick to a certain formula. Note: I know kitsune are very special to many people, so please do not feel that I am trying to define what a kitsune is in any way! This is just one of my loose interpretations.



10/31/03 Stephanie M. Helmer • SYNABAR •

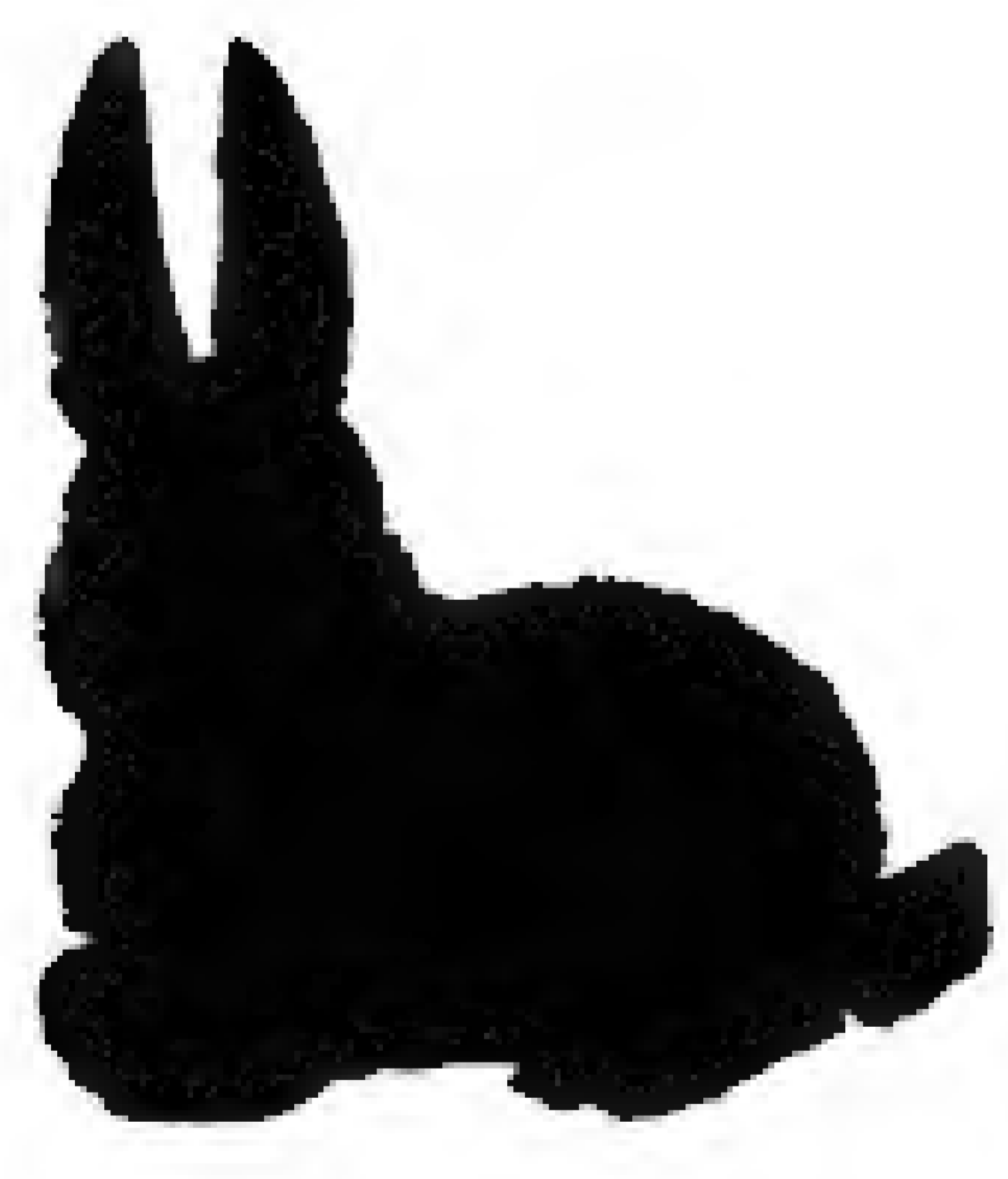


Wertle, the color-changing, glass-crafting dragon, the avatar of a friend. I tried drawing her in a mix of my style and hers — it's always fun to experiment, especially with styles quite different than my own.

Wertle, again. She had drawn a more realistic version of herself, so I tried my hand at it too. Once again I admit it's harder for me to draw cartoony than realistically! More power to all you cartoonists!



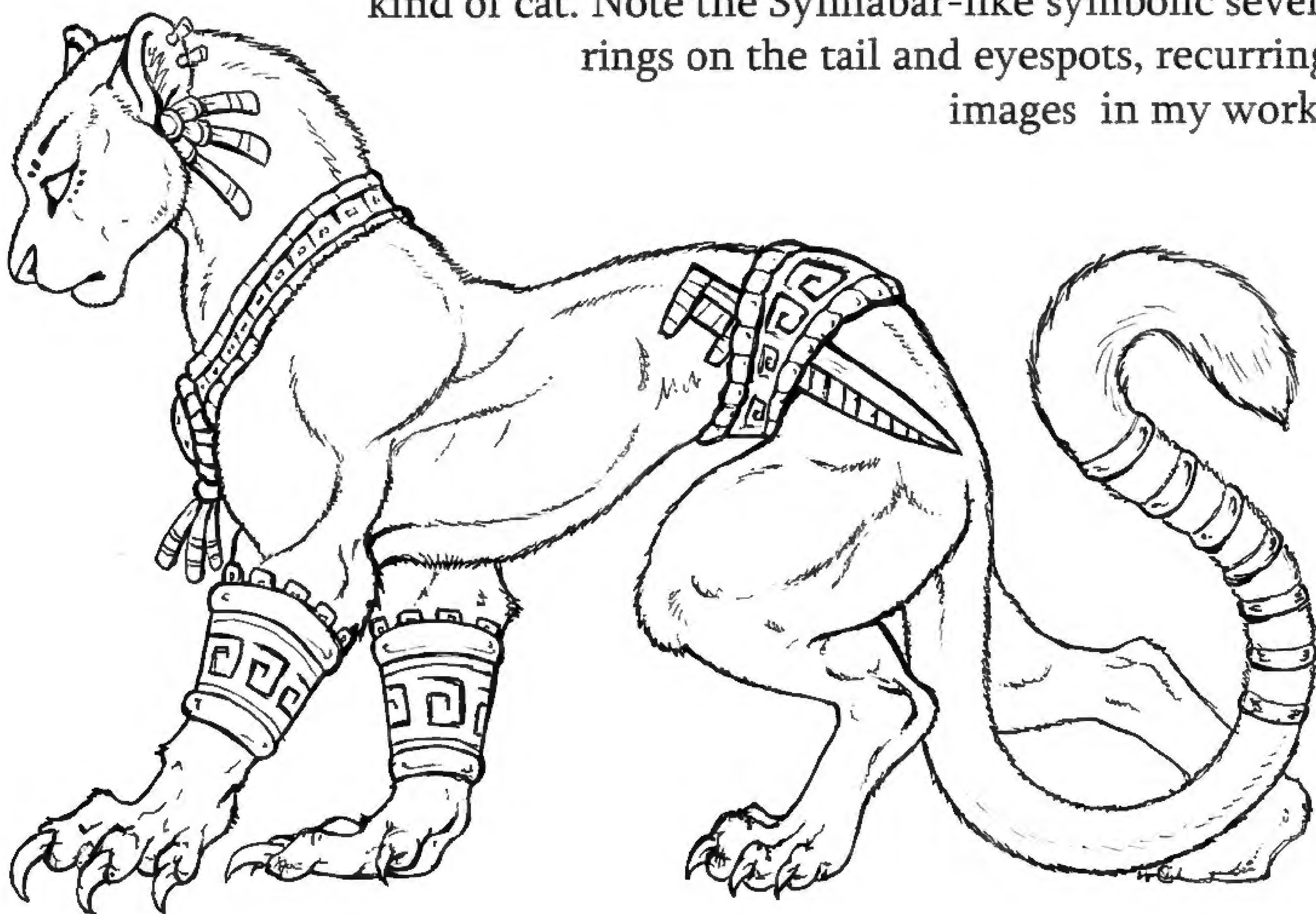
This is a good example of my "somewhat-realistic-yet-stylized-iconic" imagery. I wasn't trying to be photorealistic, or I would have used photo references. Obviously, real lions don't look like that. Still, when I use photos it's not fun for me, so I like to play around a lot (please note I do love both realistic AND stylized art! Art of any kind is good!).



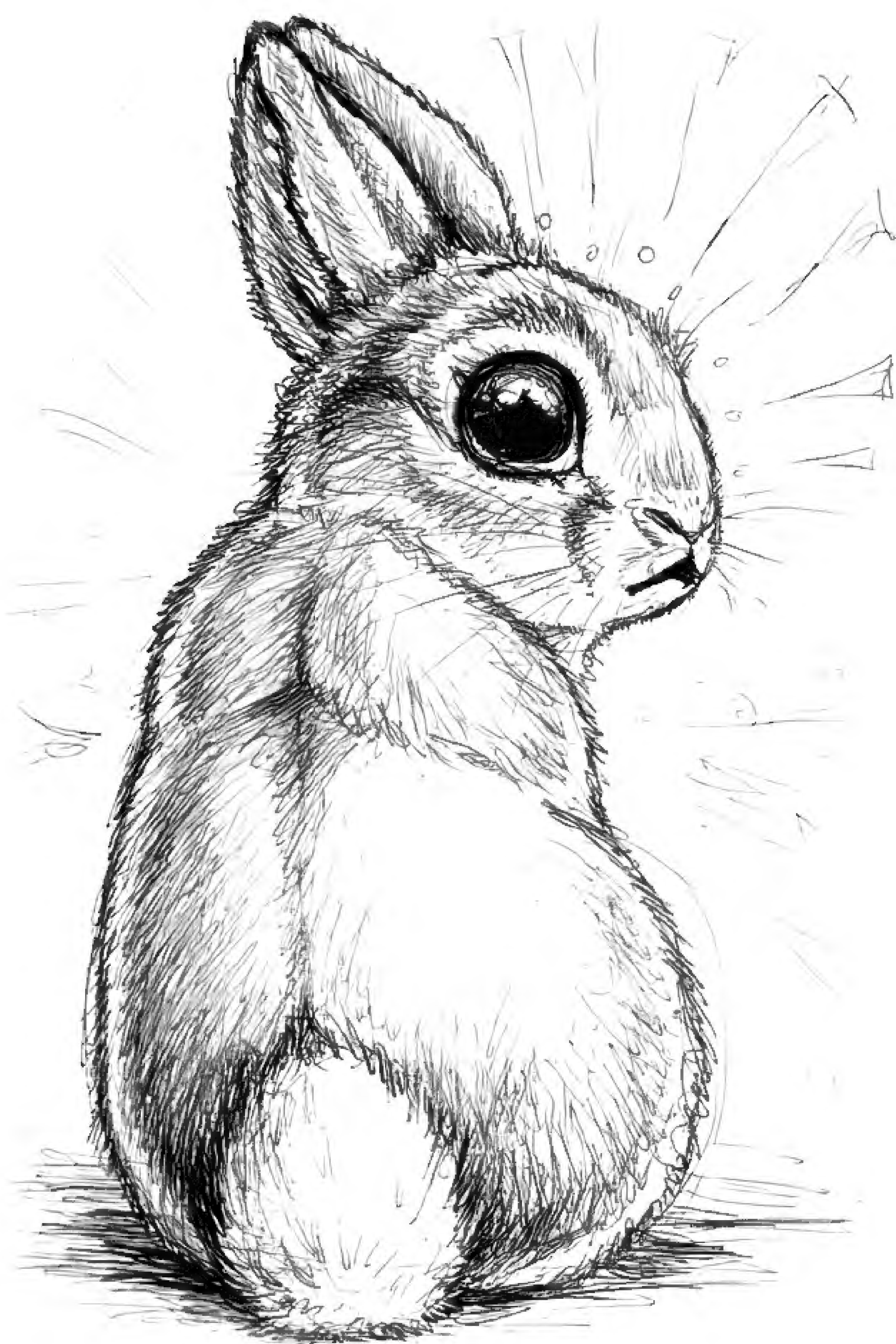
This is a 2005 version of an old "aspect" of Synnabar — Syn'Asp. I got to thinking about her again after listening to Tori Amos' song "Sweet the Sting"; she actually mentions cinnabar in it, which I thought was neat. Funny thing is, she's actually not sweet at all — I guess the song influenced me a bit. She's more of a bounty-hunter type, which I suppose I could use in a number of role-playing universes — that is, if I ever role-played!



Based on a 1994 pen sketch that I re-did in RSVP pen and submitted to Fang, Claw & Steel for its final issue. I had been doing research for my senior thesis project back then, and this is what sprang to mind. He was a model for a later piece, but his body here is more stylized, and lithe — not really very jaguar-like, but he was not really meant to be a specific kind of cat. Note the Synnabar-like symbolic seven rings on the tail and eyespots, recurring images in my work.



Yes, I'm cold; why do you ask? (I'd taken to wearing huge lumpy sweaters to keep warm at work one winter).



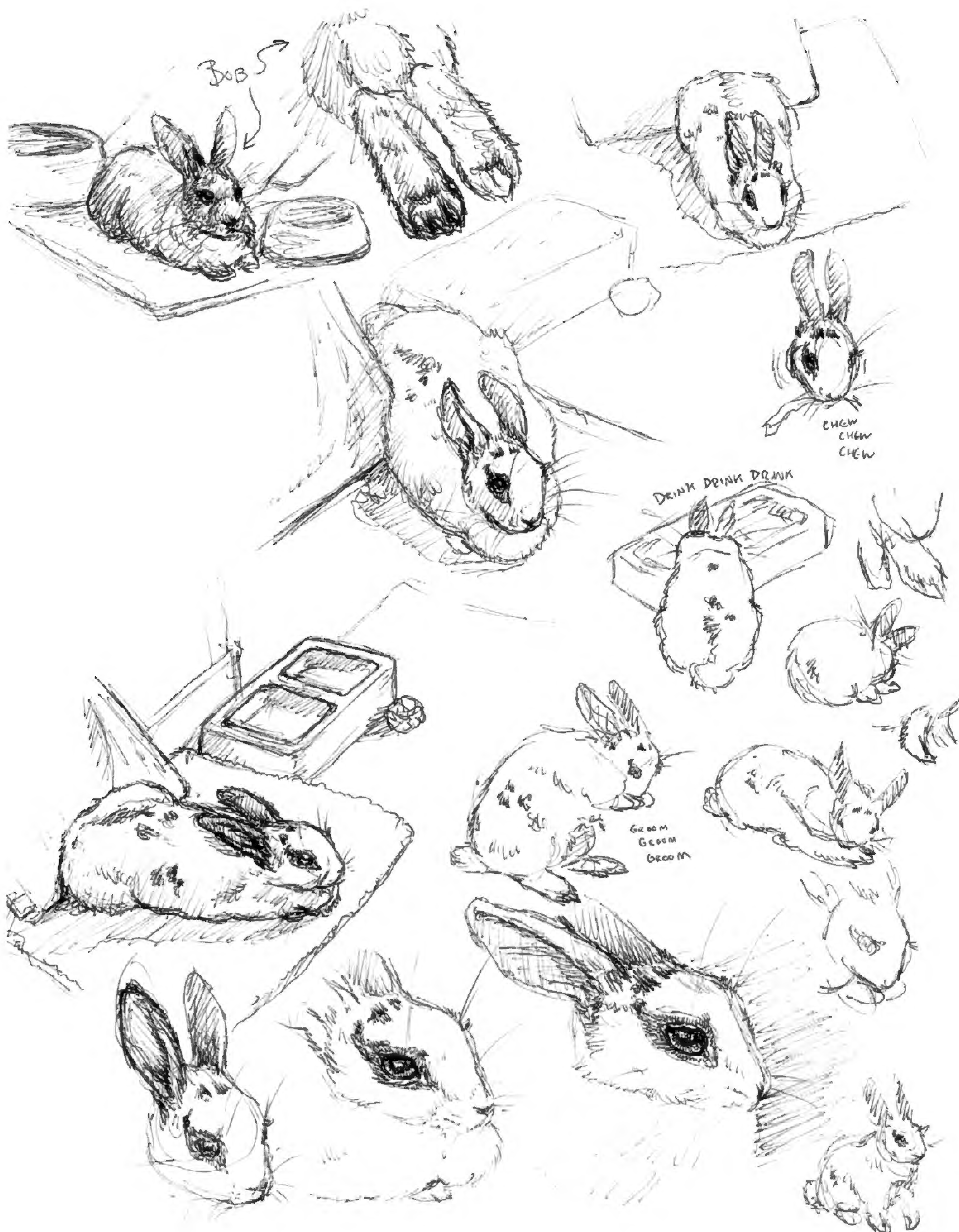
A silly mutant bunny... he's flabbergasted that someone's looking at his bum.



Someday I'll have  
the time to paint  
epic pictures! For now,  
I will be content with sketches.



Synnabar looks different  
every time I draw her —  
here she looks downright  
impish.



Featuring our bunnies, BoB and BoB's Mom (long story behind their name). One night I sketched BoB's Mom, and when I got up I saw BoB plopped down, too. Bunnies can really spread out (and look lumpy) when they want to!



I think these were inspired by the endless crafting and gardening shows I had on television when I was home with chicken pox. I was half-awake that whole week, I think! They all look like they're from somewhere else, and I'm not sure why the sphinxes have floral manes, but that's the pox for you. A friend suggested they were sphinxes with floral manes because they were "dandelions"! Makes perfect sense to me!

Synnabar the Hell-Cat (looking pretty kittenish here) is caught off-guard... I change the way she looks often, and she really has no one set form.



For a calendar project, I was asked to do the Rhodesian Ridgeback, a large dog well-known for the distinct ridge of hair that grows in the opposite direction of the rest of the fur on the back. They were often called "African Lion Hounds" as well — thus the lion with him. It's supposed to be glossy and like a vacation postcard, so of course the dog is dressed in his Zulu-inspired finest, and the lion is a bit "fluffy"; obviously, in real life, things are a lot less pretty. There was to be a stamp in the upper right and a line of text along the bottom; I left the area less-detailed there for that reason.



This is an unashamedly, unabashedly anatomically incorrect card; of course lions, rabbits, and songbirds don't really look like that! And certainly you'd never find them all together peacefully in real life; however, my theme for this year's card was "my favorite things" — including fluffy-maned lions, birds, knotwork and bunnies, so I chose to do it in my favorite-to-do "not-quite-real" style.





Here are four little pieces I did in the manner of my sketch cards, which are small pieces that are easy to carry and work on in bits of free time.



They were a lot of fun —  
I did them in the medium  
I know best (graphite),  
and I chose subjects I love  
— dragons, bunnies,  
horned cats, and vaguely-  
foxlike things.



One of my sphinxlike creatures; you may remember my Sphinx-Fleur (Dandy Lions) — this is similar, but he actually has quite a background. I imagine him in a fanciful setting, with some advanced/futuristic technology thrown in, and lots of arabesques, tapestries, and arches, too. In their world, these sphinxes exist along humans, but are treated as semi-deities and often are High Scholars or Guardians. The males have scorpion-like tail-tips, inspired by (if not appearing like) the Scorpion Men of ancient Babylon, though appearances vary.



For a calendar project, I did what I am best at, which is stylized realism, symbolism, and iconography. The background is loosely based on Tintern Abbey; I like werewolves and old churches, an idea I have explored before. I ornamented the werewolf in Celtic style jewelry, including items in the lesser known (but still beautiful) Celtic La Tène style. ↓





This is my versions of Tawa, the Sun Kachina. I drew him because I was inspired by some music a co-worker lent me: Rain Dance by Rob Whitesides-Woo. It is very soothing, and it reminds me of the wonderful week I spent in Arizona, back in 1997. Back then I did another drawing of him (trivia: my first and only tablet-colored Photoshop piece — all others before and since are mouse-colored). I never got the chance to paint him, though I'd love to someday.



Just a little fennec with gold earrings. I didn't follow references, or go crazy with fur-detailing; it's not supposed to be photorealistic... it was just me having fun.

When I'm in a bad mood, drawing usually cheers me up. Here is my Avatar, looking very stylized. This picture is finished to me; the center — the face -- is detailed, and the rest gets more scribbly radiating outward... on purpose. I do like to draw and see smooth, finished art, but I don't always want or need to do smooth, detailed pieces. There are times when I want to draw dark and rough and scribbly, both because it helps set a mood, and because it just feels good to move the pencil around like that.





I love to draw portraits of big cat heads; his adornment is a mixture of Aztec, Olmec and Mayan influences. How did they keep those hats on? Glue? I am no master at pencil, but it's the medium I feel most confident with.



Synnabar on the prowl, 2001. Here she's just patrolling her territory; this actually a sketch I did while waiting for my husband at the barber's; it was a LONG wait. I always have a small sketchbook with me to take advantage of any opportunity to draw. Not every piece is a work of art, but for me, art is more than pretty pictures — it's a way of life.





Drawn after a particularly horrendous day at work (I work 9-5). This is one of my versions of a Nightmare, though there's many different kinds ; it's cool how everyone has their own idea of what a Nightmare is. I used to draw skull-type demons in pen all the time; It's actually pretty calming and soothing to me to draw them - kind of getting my anger out on paper. I didn't try to make the anatomy realistic; I wanted a distorted look to it. The eye is supposed to be an empty, shadow-less white — which may not make sense, but then, Nightmares usually don't.

← For a music-themed portfolio; the song I chose was Loreena McKennitt's "Marco Polo". Marco Polo's journeys took him to many lands, and so I drew her costuming with a combination of elements from many cultures. I usually do not draw really "girly" things (though I love to see such work by others! — I just never seem to get around to it), so it was fun to try something different.





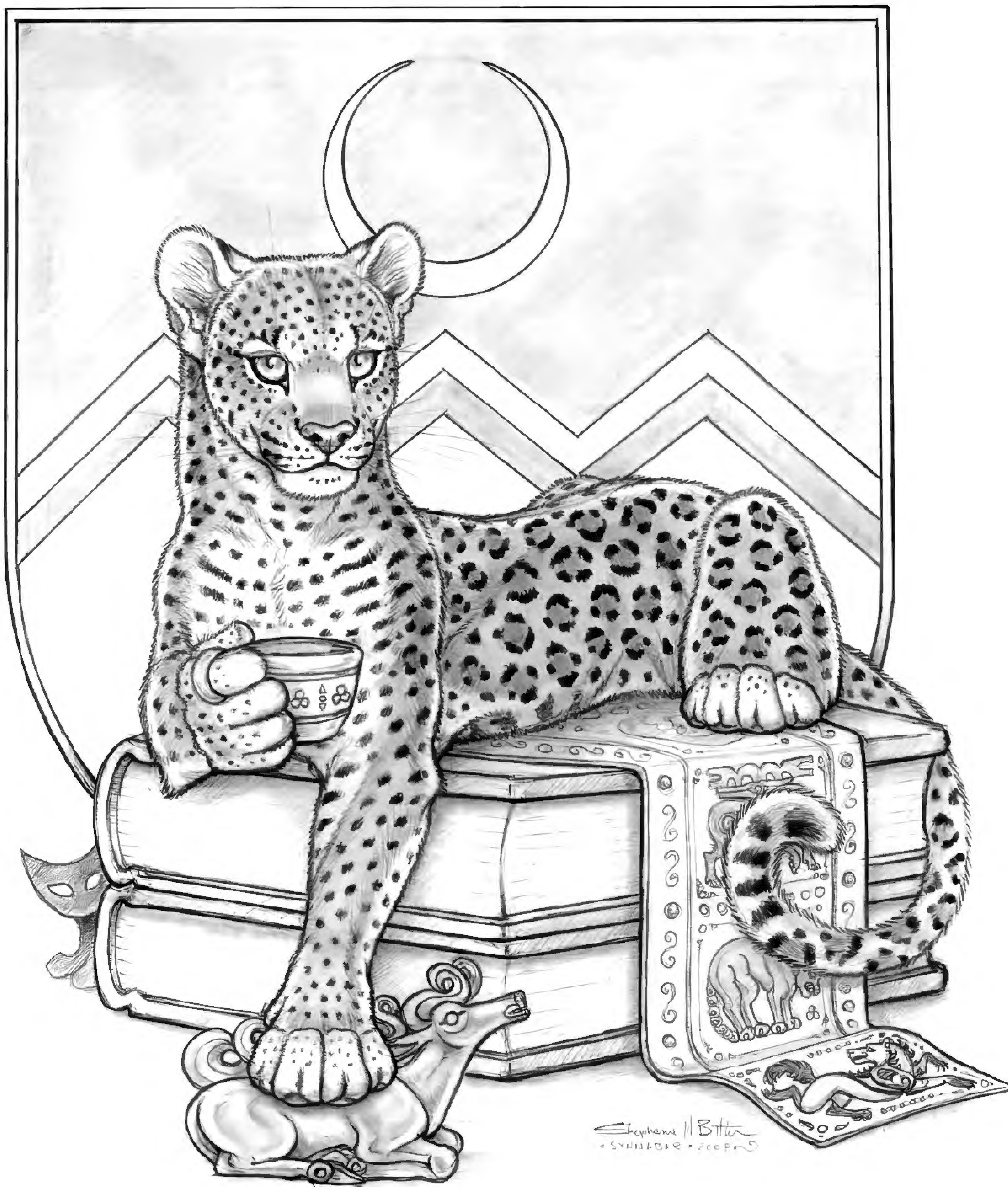
A weird but fun thing that is reminiscent of a cross between a giraffe and a tamandua, perhaps.

← This is a good example of the stylized, symbolic artwork I like to do for myself. Just wish I had more time for it! It's actually a drawing for a large pyrography piece I've been planning for a long time. I've been dying to finish it, but I haven't had the chance. I used Adobe Illustrator to do the sun disk — THAT isn't freehanded, though I did draw it in Illustrator myself. The ornamentation and Sun Disk are based on Olmec, Aztec, Mayan, and other Mesoamerican art, but adapted in my own manner. Obviously, those ancient peoples used real fur, feathers, and other objects in their ornamentation, but I love the stylizations as they appear in their carvings, codices, and sculptures, so I drew the headdress that way - in a very stylized manner. The little "face" at the bottom and the two at the sides are my own versions of a were-jaguar carving, complete with flame eyebrows.



•SMB. SYNABAR• '03~9

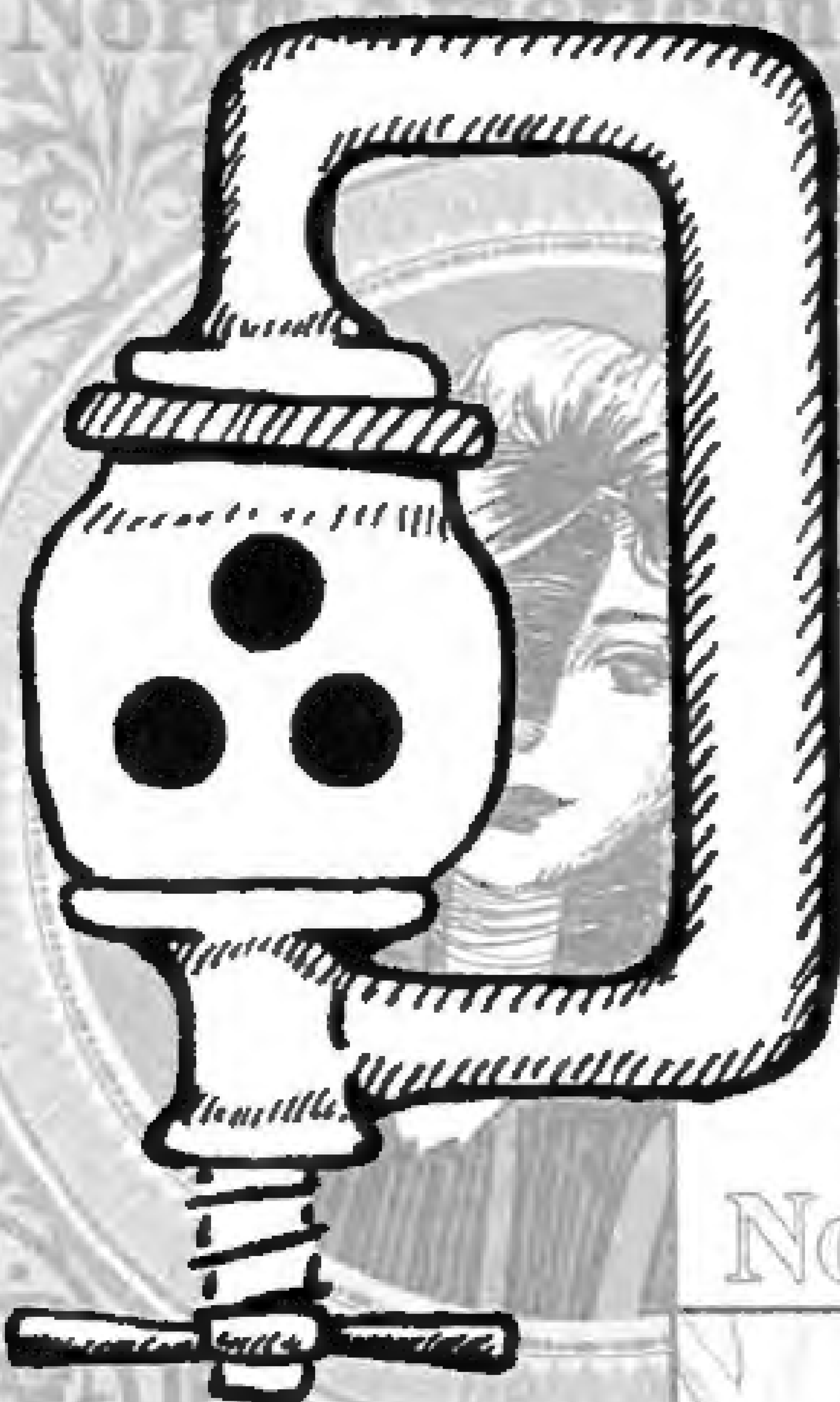
Here's a quick little painting of a husky-type girl that I did along with three other small, quick, fun pieces. No big experiments with this one, no attempt at being realistic, not High Art by any means — I was just going for a fun feeling. I looked up yellow butterflies and flowers before starting, but I ended up stylizing things my own way anyway (as usual \*laughs\*).



A very stylized sketch for a friend, featuring ornamentations, decorations, and symbols of things important to her. When I do gift art, I love to work in as many different interests as possible.



A rough sketch of a Jaguar Lady/Jungle Queen, for a portfolio project. I've since switched my idea to something else. I started with the pose; I imagined her on some Aztec or Mayan-style fabric, but it ended up being more elaborate than I'd initially planned. If I had taken this to a finished stage, I'd play around with the jaguar statue at the bottom as it relates to her feet, and detail the other jaguar statue too. She needs some anatomical fixes as well; she'd be curvier and "flow-ier" in the final, with a prettier face. I'd probably add a simple border, and make the Mesoamerican elements more "authentic" overall; these were just from my head.



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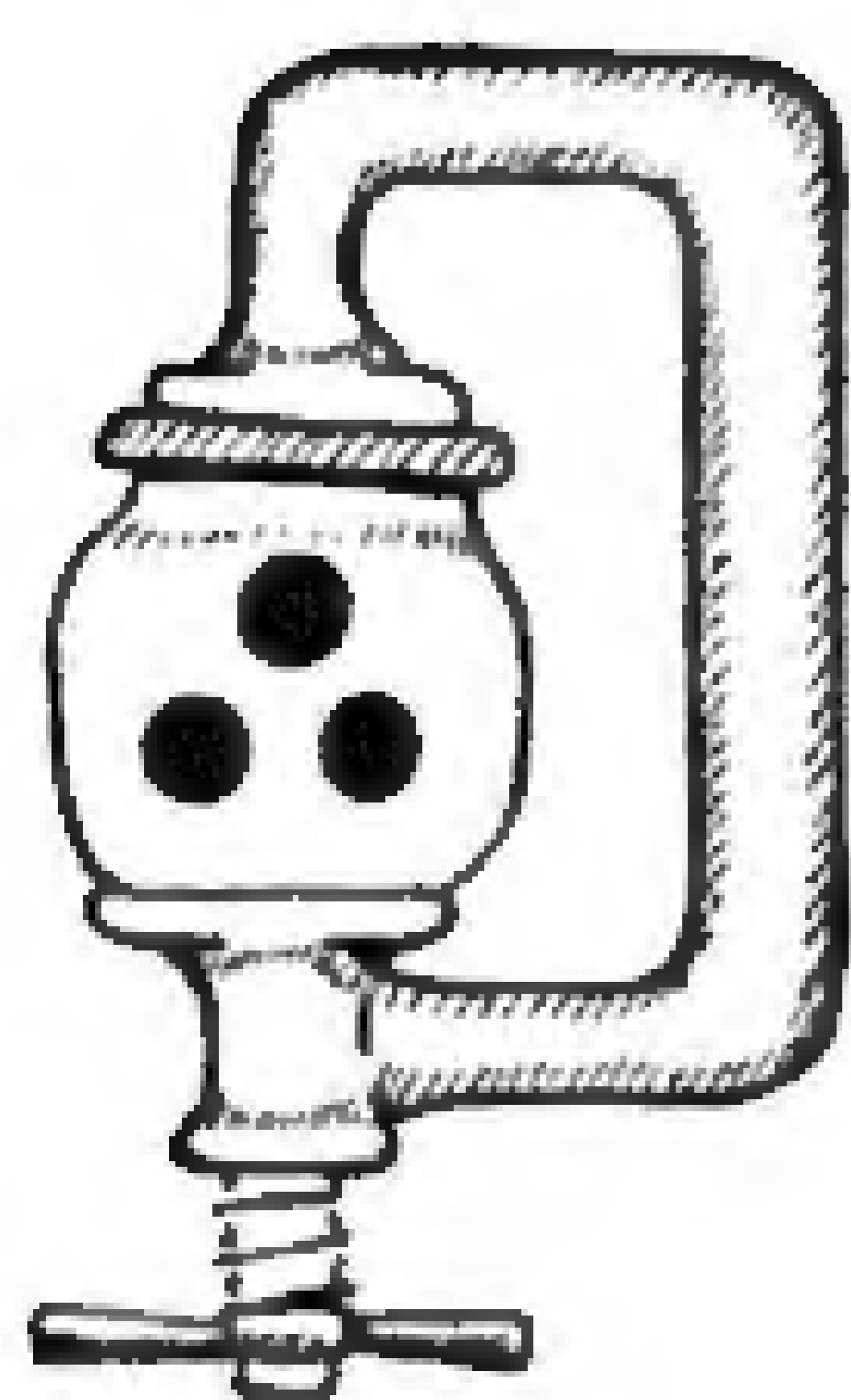
North American Fur  
Deer Me: All I Hold Deer  
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*Making small pressed furry things*

ArtZone #0, March 2008, featuring Joe Example.

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